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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2559

May 22, 1992

USDA WILL HOLD a public hearing June 15 in Alexandria, Va., on the question of whether to replace the present Minnesota-Wisconsin (M-W) milk price that is used to set minimum prices in all federal milk marketing orders. Although the M-W price has been widely accepted in the dairy industry as a good measure of changes in the supply and demand for milk nationally, a continuing decline in manufacturing grade milk is gradually making the M-W price less usable for formulating milk prices, says **Daniel D. Haley**, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. **Contact: Alicia L. Ford (202) 720-8998.**

FINETUNING FERTILIZER APPLICATION -- Farmers can protect underground water supplies without sacrificing high crop yields by simply finetuning fertilizer nitrogen applications on irrigated corn and wheat, a USDA scientists says. In a two-year study on a Nebraska corn farm, soil scientist **James S. Schepers** clamped a chlorophyll meter on corn leaves to take the guesswork out of the amount of fertilizer nitrogen needed for maximum yields. **Contact: James S. Schepers (402) 472-1513.**

SNACK FOODS BAGGING MARKETS -- Corn chips to Canada, jellybeans to Japan, salted peanuts to Sweden -- U.S. snack foods are a hit abroad and U.S. exporters are taking action, says **Lori Huthoefer**, an economist with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. Since 1986, U.S. snack food exports have almost quadrupled, leaping from \$155 million to \$587 million in 1991. This dynamic trend in snack food exports reflects aggressive steps by the snack food industry to promote U.S. foods abroad. The fastest growing exports in the U.S. snack food industry are from the confectionery group -- chocolate-based snacks, sugar-based non-chocolate candy products, puddings, cookies, cakes, pastries and other baked products. Confectioneries hold up better than salty snacks in the shipping process. **Contact: Lori Huthoefer (202) 720-1295.**

BEEF SLAUGHTER DOWN SLIGHTLY -- USDA has released figures showing the percentage of cattle slaughtered that were owned or controlled by the top 15 packer firms before slaughter (known as "captive supplies") decreased about 1.7 percentage points in 1991 from 1990. The 1991 commercial steer and heifer slaughter was 26.5 million head. The top 15 firms slaughtered 90 percent of the number, or 23.5 million head. Data collected by USDA's Packers and Stockyards Administration showed that the percentage of captive supplies rose in 1989 and then declined in both 1990 and 1991. **Contact: Sara K. Wright (202) 720-9528.**

CORN UTILIZATION CONFERENCE -- The National Corn Growers Association will hold their Corn Utilization Conference IV, June 24-26 at the Henry VIII Hotel and Conference Center, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: Robin Johnston (314) 275-9915.

TREE PLANTING REPORT -- USDA has released the annual report, "Tree Planting in the United States -- 1991," which summarizes tree planting, timber stand improvement and nursery production activities across all ownerships of forest land in the U.S. It includes state-by-state and ownership breakdowns, regional totals, as well as analysis of the trends in the data. Copies are available by calling (202) 205-1379. Contact: John Denne (202) 205-0974.

RURAL ECONOMY REMAINS SLUGGISH -- The overall rural economy remains sluggish, despite low inflation and interest rates. Movements in consumer spending and long-term interest rates will largely determine where the economy is headed, USDA economists say. To get underway, a recovery must get a boost in consumer spending because it accounts for about two-thirds of gross domestic product. The overall economic environment should be a mildly positive factor for rural employment prospects. Because the overall unemployment rate is expected to fall slightly during 1992, nonmetro rates should follow suit. Contact: Jennifer L. Beattie and R. M. Monaco (202) 219-0782.

LARGE MEAT OUTPUT will put downward pressure on producer prices, USDA economists say. Production of broilers, turkeys and eggs will likely be above a year ago, which will cause generally lower producer prices. Poultry meat producers are facing heightened competition from red meats. Lower prices and slightly higher feed costs are pushing returns to near breakeven or below in each poultry sector. Contact: Leland Southard (202) 219-0767.

RURAL POVERTY STILL HIGH -- Poverty continued to be more severe in rural areas than in urban areas in 1990, the most recent year for which data are available, USDA economists say. Rural areas have consistently had a higher poverty rate than urban areas, at least since 1967. Rural people living in families headed by women is an increasingly serious problem for rural areas. The share of the rural poor living in such families has increased from 22 percent in 1969 to the present 30 percent. Contact: Robert Hoppe (202) 219-0807.

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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1824 -- How long before farmers will not have to be concerned about the destructive whitefly? On this edition of **Agriculture USA**, **Brenda Curtis** talks with research scientists about the latest developments concerning whitefly eradication and control. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1305 -- Restaurants and singles; potatoes -- convenient and nutritious; how rich is enriched flour; farm-raised shrimp imports; chicken is flying high. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1815 -- USDA News Highlights; foreign food aide; meat supplies pressure prices; 1992 whitefly outlook; transgenic cotton plants. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1521 -- Some potatoes like it hot; cornstarch foam insulation; dead grass herbicides; cow compound may help humans; computerized beehive. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Mon., June 1, horticultural exports; Tues., June 2, weekly weather and crop update; Fri., June 5, dairy products report; Mon., June 8, vegetables report. (These are the **USDA reports we know about in advance**. Our **Newsline** carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on zoysia grass research; **Pat O'Leary** reports on the popular potato, **Lynn Wyvill** reports on summer food safety and **Will Pemble** reports on using "big-eyed" bugs to attack whiteflies.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA economist **Barbara Claffey** on impact of general economy on entry and exit into farming and mushroom production; USDA meteorologist **Norton Strommen** on the latest weather and crop developments and USDA economist **William Leifert** on former Soviet Union agricultural production.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **DeBoria Janifer** reports on state rural development council; **Pat O'Leary** reports on national turkey lovers' month and **Lynn Wyvill** reports on the livestock outlook and food safety after a power failure.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

SIX-MONTHS LEAVE OF ABSENCE...has been taken by **Jerry Perkins** (Iowa Corn Promotion Board, West Des Moines) to operate an agribusiness center near Stavropol, Russia for the Iowa International Development Foundation. The center has three main goals: display Iowa agribusiness products and technology; demonstrate high-yielding crops and growing practices; and give instruction in marketing, processing and other post-production techniques. Jerry will be joined at the site this summer by his wife and three sons. Jerry says the Perkins family is regarding the change as an opportunity to learn and grow. Thanks to **Doug Cooper** (Iowa State University/Ag Extension, Ames) for the information. Doug is serving as the contact for Jerry, and has agreed to assemble and send "Care" packages every other week to the Perkins' during their stay.

AG TOUR...of Israel is scheduled in November by **Al Pell** and **Don Green** (AgDay, Lafayette, Ind.). They spent ten days last March in the nation producing reports for the network on crops, markets, systems used for water-saving irrigation and research on salinity tolerance and desalinization.

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NATIONAL AG DAY...was observed by **Von Ketelsen** (KOEL, Oelswein, Iowa) with a chores contest. The station volunteered Von to do chores on the winning farm. Von says the response was terrific, lots of entries. Even the neighbors came by to watch Von shovel out the stalls of the winning family's dairy barn. The prize also included Von taking the family, parents and seven children, to lunch. The station is planning to conduct the contest next year for Ag Day.

CONGRATULATIONS...to **Col. Dink Embry** (WHOP, Hopkinsville, Ken.). The state House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring him for his leadership and service to the people of Kentucky. Dink has been farm director at WHOP for 47 years.


VIC POWELL

Chief, Radio and TV Division